

Savvy Blogging for Time Starved Writers



Cate Russell~Cole

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Blog Treasures Hidden in Plain Sight	5
Get Yourself A Second Brain	8
Slack, Fake and Egocentric Followers: How to Pick Them!	10
Blog Post Promotion on Social Media: Instantly Hooking Reader Attention	12
Sometimes, It Just Goes Wrong: When to Ditch!	14
The Best Kept Editing Secret	15
10% On Top: Being a More Efficient Writer	17
Professional, Effective Author Sites: The Problems With Using Blogs	18
Cleaning the Cobwebs Out of Blogs: Reader Engagement and Content Value	20
Guest Posting as Advertising: How To Be Professional and Be Asked Back	21
Your Individuality is Your Greatest Asset: Writing and Marketing as You	24
Faulty-Tasking	25
The Road to Success is Paved by Free-Sharing	26
About the Author	27
Publications by Cate Russell-Cole	27

Introduction

This ebook contains the best posts which were published on the old CommuniCATE Resources for Writers blog, which was lost in 2015, thanks to hackers.

My hope is that it will encourage, empower and inspire you.

Best wishes on your creative journey.

Cate Russell-Cole

Reader Feedback on CommuniCATE:

"I've enjoyed each of your psychology-based writing posts. They are an excellent resource to reflect back on my characters and how they've reacted / will react, and whether I've given them enough layers to make them feel real to readers - even when they don't feel real to themselves. Keep 'em coming!"
Shelly Immel, Fiction Writer and Founder of The Big Life Project

"Cate, As a memoir writer, I have to be able to get back into my own head to convey the essence of the truth and reality of past experiences to make them real to the reader. These writing posts are valuable resources for any genre. Thank you!"
Kathleen Pooler, Memoir Writer

Blog Treasures Hidden in Plain Sight

I was chatting to someone about how far back they read through blog posts. The general consensus seemed to be, that unless visiting that discovering a new blog turned into "love at first sight," you don't tend to dig back too far, or visit archives. There isn't the time! She was suggesting that I put information on my e-books on my blog. That worried me. Not because it wasn't a great idea, but because that information was already there!

My blog header is full of links to pages. It appears as a navigation bar, the same as you see on any web site. They contain my full bio, e-books, feedback about my work and other information I want you to read. It seems she never noticed and from my blog stats, I know people rarely look. I quickly made sure I had my books featured more prominently. My Pages are now also listed as a sidebar widget which is working better than anything else has.

Where do you look when you read a blog page? It seems we don't just look back, we may also not look up, down or to the left or right.

Perhaps I missed my calling in archaeology or crime scene investigation, but I habitually poke around. I am always looking for ideas on great blog design, but I find more than that. The sidebars are great treasure troves!

I know some bloggers cram their side bars with junk and advertising, but within that minefield, there are resources I would never have found on the web any other way. I don't have the time to do long searches for services... some which I haven't even considered I needed before. I find them in the side bars! If the blog owner has hotlinked the image back to the source, it's heaven! If not, at least I know what to search for. I've been known to bookmark blogs just to come back and raid that sidebar. Who knew you could get traffic that way?

So what have I found through sidebars? Here is a small selection. Just click on the name or link to go there.

[ROW80](#)

<http://www.blogwithintegrity.com/>

<http://www.ladieswhocritique.com>

<http://www.bloglovin.com/>

<http://blogaliciousblogs.blogspot.com.au/>

<http://www.bloghub.com/>

[Google Friend Connect](#)

[Networked Blogs](#)

[She Writes](#)

<http://www.blognotions.com/>

<http://www.buzzerhut.com/>

<http://www.yousaytoo.com/>

<http://www.fuelmyblog.com>

<http://theblogfrog.com/>

<http://bloggers.com/>

<http://triberr.com/>

[Goodreads Reading Challenge Progress Bars](#)

[Twitpic](#) has a widget you can place on your blog

We Blog: Blogging Community on Facebook that shares posts freely <http://www.facebook.com/groups/240976049268613/>

<http://compassionbloggers.com/get-involved>

<http://wanatribe.com>

[Camp NaNoWriMo](#)

Anti-book Piracy free badges for web sites <http://www.lalasdesigns.com/search/label/Badges> and more!

An excellent example of how to do an easy-to-read side bar comes from [Juliana Haygert](#). Juliana lists her books; makes it easy to follow her around the Internet; has a great image link to her publisher; interesting information about her; her Twitter feed is at the base and from her I discovered three new bars of gold I never knew existed. You cannot do much better than that. She has covered the most important areas.

Think about your blog. Do you really need that calendar which don't mean much to the reader? What are your priorities in getting information across? What represents you best?

So when you're visiting a blog, take a look to the left, the top under the header and the right! If you are a blogger, make that sidebar count! I'll visit to raid it.

Get Yourself A Second Brain

I know a lot of writers who are stationary buffs, so you'll understand what I'm talking about. Half way through last year, I got frustrated and threw my diary out. I wasn't pitching a fit over a trivial incident, I just ran out of room. Even worse, I am a diary fanatic. That book is my second brain and I am totally dependent on it!

All my diaries are lovingly and carefully chosen for size and features: and this was one of the best I have ever had. It had the month to a page at the beginning of each month, week to a page view, business card section and every month had a neat divider, so I could flick around and schedule. It hadn't been a cheapie either! For a diary of that calibre to bite the dust, something had dramatically changed.

The good news is, that change was success at what I was doing! I was writing more and I needed planning space. I don't have many appointments, so my diary pages are devoted to work to-do's, time tallies and reminders of event preparation. It never leaves my desk, as I must look at it every day, or I have no idea where I am up to. My head is too full to fly by the seat of my pants.

I have converted to digital as much as I can, but there's a catch. I always need information fast when my computer is off, there is a thunderstorm or my iPad has run out of battery life! I use my iPod touch when I go out, but I still need the ease of paper. Some days you want to jot down an idea before it's lost; plus I was totally sick of rummaging around my desk trying to find the separate blog post idea folder, the phone bill, my shopping list for the business, the guest post schedule, my e-book outlines! I just wanted one space which had everything. It was a way to save time and sanity.

So I did it the easy way. I grabbed a lever arch file out of my cupboard, printed off my iCal calendar for 15 months in both month to a view and week to a view, then put in month and subject dividers. It's been the most useful tool I've ever devised! My iCal files have all our financial reminders, birthdays and public holidays logged in. So they immediately appear on the pages, coded in colour. I have separated my blog posts, time sheets and other essentials with dividers and all I do now is flick it open. The best thing is, if I totally mess up a page as schedules and plans have changed: it easily gets reprinted. No more using correction fluid that never works properly, or building up layers upon layers of white stickers I can write over the top of. My diaries never used to shut properly anyway!

In the past I have had swish Debden diaries with the gorgeous leather cover, many customisation options and that wonderful ruler which marks where you are. That hobby was expensive, plus I loathe working in black and white! By printing an A4 diary, for each week I also have an adjoining blank page I can use as a scrapbook, or extra note space. I invested in quotation stickers from Kikki-K to brighten it up and it's a pleasant space to work. Plus it does fit in my brief case; though I take the option of removing the small part of the diary I need and taking it in a flat file. Less weight is always welcome.

So if you too are having space and memory issues: plug your regular items into your computer, print it, throw it in a folder and enjoy the outcome. Sometimes the simple solutions just work better.

Slack, Fake and Egocentric Followers: How to Pick Them!

Are your followers real, shallow, spam or marketers? How do you tell? When Kristen Lamb threatened to block anyone inappropriately using the #MyWANA community tag, her action to cut down on the automation used by spammers and freeloading promoters made me think about what was going on among my "followers."

I had a dig around Twitter, and was surprised at the amount of automated direct messages I was getting: particularly the lightning fast follow-backs. I have used Just Unfollow to unfollow inactive user accounts, so I know you can auto-follow through such services without lifting a finger, or checking a new follower out. "*Untouched by human hands...*" I began to question just how many people were following me that had never heard my name or read a tweet. As it turns out, there were quite a few...

This may not be an issue for you, but I run a business. I am trying to keep track of how effective I am. I don't want auto-followback to swell my numbers and give me false stats. I want to know whether or not I am providing a service that is used and needed.

So after watching responses to my follows for the last few weeks, and being disturbed by it, today I embarked on a clean out. I went through my Twitter messages, located everyone who had sent me a clearly automated missive... (which they hadn't even edited to sound like human contact) and I checked their feed. These are the characteristics of all the automaters I found. These traits repeated consistently:

1. The most forgivable transgressors had over ten thousand followers and to be fair, would be **swamped** in saying hi to everyone. (This was very rare.)
2. **They tweeted about nothing but themselves:** their books, their book characters, and/or their daily stats on how many people followed or un-followed them. (One writer was musing over why he'd lost over 50 followers that week, when the sum total of his tweets for that time, was how many people had read his dying follower stats and run away. Action = Reaction) There were few re-tweets of others' work, little goodwill-building interaction and almost no conversations.
3. **They tweeted so rarely**, I would call them superficial or slack tweeters. Then, most of the tweets were purely book promotion or reviews they wanted shared. Was it

that they didn't understand social engagement, were over-burdened by too many social media obligations or were they just 'fishing marketing' and they felt they had to use Twitter?

So if you are looking for a way to find out who is real and who is just taking you on *their promotional journey*, check your direct messages on Twitter, or new follower feeds, then see how many people they talk to and share tweets from. You will see a clear difference.

Follower numbers are just a rough guideline. It's interaction with people that shows you where you're really at.

(My next wish from the techie genies, is for a "block follower" button here on Wordpress. I am noticing how many followers I am getting who are not reading my blog, but just looking for me to click on their link and follow them. How did I find that out? When I started a new personal blog, and the total followers I had outweighed the number of post hits by 300%. I had thought that growth rate rank of steroid enhancement...)

Blog Post Promotion on Social Media: Instantly Hooking Reader Attention

[This is all the space you have to grab a reader's attention when your post is promoted on social media. Sometimes you have] a little more space, sometimes you don't. It works the same way as the first paragraph of a novel, if you don't hook the reader in that "prime real estate," you lose their interest.



Let me give you an example or two. When you post a link on Facebook, whether on your timeline or page, you get an image and the best part of a long sentence.

If you use this space to say, "This is part 28 of my series on books..." your blog post may not come across as appealing to read. The same works for guest posts where you introduce people, rather than letting their message pull in interest. "Joining me today as part of the "Lessons from the Writing Life" Guest Post series is Molly Jones..." I am out of promotional space. No one sees who Molly is, or why they should use their limited time to read the post.



Sonia Marsh 17 Apr 2013 - Public



🕒 "Giving Up Everything to Find What Matters" | Sonia Marsh - Gutsy Living »

Carol Bodensteiner stepped out of her successful corporate job and realized that sometimes it takes giving up everything to find what matters in life.

+1



Google Plus works the same way. Unless you write an introductory comment to attract attention, you get a blue hotlink and the first sentence. That's all.

Please do visit Sonia's blog, Gutsy Living. It's awesome. <http://soniamarsh.com> That wasn't enough either was it? Again, so much of our success in gaining promotion comes from great tag lines. "Sonia's blog features ordinary people who overcome the challenges in their lives. It empowers me when I read it."

If you are a [Triberr](#) user, you have yet another problem. The tag line from your blog can get in the way of Triberr promoting the first line of your post. All the readers will see for any post is "CommuniCATE features resources for writers which are published twice weekly." That is useless. Because of this, I deleted my tag line. I noticed my share stats had dwindled and this was why. Here is what a well done post on Triberr looks like. (You may prefer no hashtags in the title.)

So think about what you put in that all important space. It will make a significant difference.

Sometimes, It Just Goes Wrong: When to Ditch!

The writing life is a process of trial and error. Getting it right or wrong with social media; finding the right blog audience; marketing your book to the correct readers... You can research, try and in the end, sometimes you just have to bail out and admit defeat in an area. Note that I am saying "an area." Don't quit completely over any mistake.

I had a 'great' blog post idea. I decided to start every week with a quick dose of motivation for writers: "Writer's Rocket Fuel." I set the posts up; watched my stats... hoped for an improvement; watched my stats some more... had a little sigh... felt like an idiot... You know, you've been there too. My fuel pump sprang a leak. This blog started as a blog on creativity... that sprung an instant, fatal leak too... I've had to swallow my pet project ideas, and be willing to learn without discouragement turning poisonous.

So what to do? Firstly, I had to look at why Writing Rocket Fuel died. I had gone against my own advice and set up a feature that would be a statistic booster. How many times have I said "this is not about SEO, numbers etc?" I was sucked in like everyone else. That was my biggest failure. Sure, Rocket Fuel would encourage people, but it would make my follower and visit stats a little fatter. I think the universe slapped me with my own preaching. Fair enough.

I also set it up so I wouldn't have to promote these quick shots as heavily as my regular blog posts. My Triberr buddies faithfully passed the posts on... but they weren't being read. This could be partially due to the quote posts being readable in the promo, so no one had to click a link... another lesson. Short posts serve no purpose in attracting readers.

So I decided to ditch. I deleted around twenty useless posts which I knew wouldn't fly. I renamed the others, and decided to promote the most valuable content properly. Several remaining posts with the best content will appear over the year, but spread out. While I was at it, I gave the blog a massive overhaul and deleted posts I hated, were out of date or were just not up to the standard I wanted.

The take-home message: don't be afraid to start over. You may feel as annoyed, but it does get the job completed. Fresh starts are good. Be brave.

The Best Kept Editing Secret

In 2000 I published a memoir writing course. It has been revised four times and edited by three trained editors: two at University level. I have put countless hours of work into perfecting it, but guess what? If you read through, you will still find very small typos hidden in it like Easter Eggs. That drives me to screaming point!

It's not just me. Since I've switched to e-books, I am finding frequent mistakes in books from best selling authors, distributed through traditional publishing houses. One mistake was of an unrelated sexual nature and the spell checker, or editor, should have easily picked it up. It looks like the editing monsters are tormenting more souls than mine!

So why does this happen? Let me tell you the secret. When I researched "Unleashing Your Creative Spirit," I delved into theories on memory and how it functions. Your brain is the busiest organ in your body. It runs your internal organs, all your movements, your memory, computes stimuli from your five senses, logs time, drives your subconscious thinking processes and deals with what you are doing now: reading. At the same time, it makes sure you aren't hot / cold / hungry / thirsty / tired / in pain, or about to be run over by a bus! It has to compute what is around you, plus predict what to expect next.

That is a massive workload to achieve all at once! So the brain, being smart, has brilliant means of conserving energy. It's actually very eco-friendly, but that's sometimes to a writer's detriment.

Have you ever been to a friend's place and said, "You've repainted," just to have them look at you strangely and tell you they did it five years ago? Of course, it will be the home of that friend you visit fairly frequently. It's a common faux pas. We all go to familiar places and say, "I never noticed that before." It happens because in order to save the energy it takes to log all the details, your brain does a quick scan and just takes in what is the most important. For what it considers to be familiar or non-essential details, it relies on memory, or blocks stimuli out.

How does this work with editing? When you have read the same paragraph ten times, it becomes too familiar. The brain automatically decides that you don't need to re-log all that, so mistakes go unnoticed. You've seen those emails where you can still read

sentences, even though the letters in the middle of the words are mixed up? They work because a familiar pattern is identified and you auto-fill the rest.

So, how do we overcome this? Make your work look new! When I started blogging, I discovered that I would pick up mistakes in Wordpress' preview mode that I couldn't see in the writing window. In preview, the font size differed and words were in different spots on the page. If you're working in a word processor, you can try for the same effect by changing fonts, changing margin widths, altering text color, or opening the document in a totally different word processor.

The other lifesaver I use is to put my work aside, wait 48 hours then edit again. That gives my brain a chance to re-set.

So don't beat yourself up over the occasional small typo. We all make them. Do everything you can to prevent the slip-ups from happening and remember: it's all because you're just too efficient!

10% On Top: Being a More Efficient Writer

When I was in Senior High School and the dreaded final exams were approaching, our school adopted a program called "10% On Top." The idea was for every student to pick a teacher they related to, then we'd be given study and exam tips that would improve efficiency and thus our exam results, by 10%.

I don't know whether it did actually help statistically, but mentally, the support and extra know-how was incalculable. To have someone help you work out a study timetable that was realistic; prepare you for what was to come and steady the nerves was a godsend! Some schools still use the program... ahem, a 'few' years later, so it must have paid off.

Every year when NaNoWriMo begins to loom in October, a flurry of preparation begins. That is when I remember the 10% On Top program. Having a pre-planned schedule for writing, which is weaved around *real life*, seems the best way to approach Nano. Maybe High School has taught me an actual useful life lesson!

Often our passion for our goals overshadows all else. We don't allow for creative dates to refresh ourselves; we don't allow for the chaos of everyday family living and we never allow time for the unseen to throw everything out of kilter. It's hard to sit at a computer or with a pen in hand and write when we're surrounded by noise, unfinished business and we can't remember where we're up to, or know where we are going. Time runs out, we get frustrated; the guilt cycle kicks in.

If you run a business, some preparation is utterly essential. You need staff, business hours, inventory or services to offer. There must be a plan of some sort, or you will fail. Power companies plan for peak periods of demand; Supermarkets stock their shelves based on weather conditions, which determine what products will be the most popular. Writing is exactly the same. You need to plan ahead to achieve and survive.

So wherever you are situated in your writing life now, take the time to prepare to increase your efficiency by 10%. Plan your schedule and tasks realistically. Take into account public holidays, birthdays and weekends; then allow a little extra time for the unseen incidents that will inevitably pop up. Having a plan can help steady the nerves and if the Senior High School program is any example, the benefits are long term!

Professional, Effective Author Sites: The Problems With Using Blogs

It's been said that it's essential for authors to have a dedicated website *and* a blog. I can see the benefits of combining both, however, it concerns me when blogs are used as author websites. I see many where the blog quality is not doing that author justice at all. It can work against you. I also had to ask, "since when is a blog a product website?" In the commercial world, it's not. You need both if you want to succeed.

I do understand that technology and code can be utterly daunting, plus the expense of hiring a site developer can be exorbitant. I don't judge any author by using Blogger or Wordpress, especially Indie authors. However, there is one exception which makes me back off someone's site... and which helps give independent authors a bad name: a standard, half-working, thrown together blog.

For those of you who don't want to be broke or a geek, you can get away with using a blog if it is done well. Here is what will kill your author site credibility if you drop the ball:

~ Using the first theme that comes up as the freebie. We know you didn't even try! If it is Twenty-Ten, Twenty-Twelve or Twenty-Thirteen it's a dead give-away. These are the automatically chosen defaults Wordpress starts you with. The name appears at the bottom of your blog.

~ Widgets that don't work! The Twitter widget on Wordpress is a frequent offender, for that reason, I stopped using it. I have noticed it malfunctioning on many blogs.

~ Old information in the side bars: out of date events, accounts and links that no longer work make your blog look abandoned and show your commitment level. Update regularly and change content to draw new interest (and draw in search engines.)

~ Using all the basic, standard template features: leaving on calendars, meta data, categories, recent comments etc. all as they appear on the template, without just leaving what works. Also, get rid of the Hello World first post and the rubbish in the Links which are automatically provided.

- ~ **More than one sidebar** so the blog is crammed and hard to read.
 - ~ Not adding **your copyright** at the base of the page, to a sidebar or to posts.
 - ~ Not deleting the standard template page which comes with the blog and adding **your own pages**, or leaving only one.
 - ~ **Too many negative apology posts** over not keeping up with your commitment to blog or write.
- Also: if you write for an initiative such as ROW80 or #writemotivation, please, get yourself a separate blog and put your writing woes there: and don't make it open to search engines. You can dent your reputation! Also, put your personal stuff elsewhere: this is your business shopfront.
- ~ Not replacing the template **headers and backgrounds** with your own.
 - ~ Please make the small financial commitment to add **your own custom web address** to your blog and **turn off the ads**. I was lucky enough to get a blog url which was my Twitter handle, so I dodged one expense, but the ads, they had to go. On Wordpress it is \$30 a year. Your own domain name is \$18.
 - ~ Please, **don't take your blog live** until all the technical issues and design are completed. I know you'll be proud of your new blog, but resist the temptation to go out half-dressed.

So my apologies to the writers who believe it is hard to have a bad website, but when you read a lot of blogs and visit well executed writer's sites, it is actually incredibly easy to pick out who cares, who is professional and who understands their marketplace... and who doesn't. It can help you achieve or it can help you fail.

Cleaning the Cobwebs Out of Blogs: Reader Engagement and Content Value

As blogs grow, action needs to be taken with blogs to make them engaging to readers, rather than leaving them full of old flotsam. From time to time I remove out of date content as I want readers to be able to find the good stuff. If you have a blog which is a few years old and needs a broom taken to it, be brave. Here are the benefits:

1. I can see what ideas and series worked and didn't. So I know what not to repeat.
2. I've located and removed posts that can be re-written or re-used at a later date.
3. Less popular posts have been moved to a less prominent position or deleted.
4. I'm finding weird phenomena where some posts have been shared more than read. I know now, that I need to investigate how these share buttons really work.
5. Old events are removed.
6. Off-topic or personal posts are gone.
7. All blog posts are now backed up onto xml files and a private blog for safety.

Well-performing entries with great content, are better than a dusty archive of "what was" any day.

P.S. If you want to **back up your Wordpress blog** for safety, or to move it elsewhere, go to Tools then Export. It will do it easily. At the other end, go to Tools then Import. Just be aware, I couldn't take my entire blog in one file to my new one as its limit for taking in content was 11MB and my blog backup up as 14MB without images! However, I found if I imported each category individually, it all went up without any hassles. Also, unless you are going between Wordpress blogs hosted on their free site, images won't go with you. Between free Wordpress blogs, they transfer as they already belong to the same user.

Guest Posting as Advertising: How To Be Professional and Be Asked Back

Getting a guest post on someone's blog is a bonus. You reach a new audience, show your wares and open yourself up to meeting new contacts. It's essential advertising you can't put a price on... However, many bloggers will not allow guest posts and for excellent reasons. Having taken guest posts for two years and being used, abandoned, over-worked and given the run around, I have recently changed CommuniCATE's policy to protect my time and blog quality. Don't go looking for the sign up page, I shot it.

I should warn you, this post may sound a tad annoyed in places. I had 33 "guests" to deal with in 2013. It's was a loooooooong year... Though, I promise you, those who did submit were well worth it!

Here are the elements that will make you a great guest poster, one that I will lay out the red carpet to have back.

- **Read the guest post guidelines** and if you don't fit them, decline politely. If your post offer has nothing whatsoever to do with writing, then I know you don't read this blog and are using me: I will say no. I have a theme. It's up there in the header you see on *every guest post*. I will promote your books if you give something to other writers, by way of sharing a writing lesson you've learnt. Simple barter. Find out what other bloggers want and think before you ask for a spot.
- Include your blog, social media and web site **details** so the blogger doesn't have to waste time chasing you around the Internet. This includes book links.
- Include a thumbnail **photo** of you and small images of your book covers.
- Write a one-size-fits-all **bio** about yourself and send it out with all queries and posts. I wind up wasting a lot time going to people's "about" page to do them justice.

See those last three points: they are the difference between **professional marketing** and not knowing how to package yourself. All writers need to learn how to do this. I have it all in one file and it's 'copy and paste' into the document or email.

There is another point: a good blog host will keep promoting the guest and will send them a thank you e-card or free book. The guest has done you a service. A thoughtful thank you is appreciated.

- Never, ever, ever do a blog tour, cover reveal or guest post and then not **link back to the hosting blogger** in some way and **promote their post on social media liberally**.
- **If you're doing a tour:** stagger dates and make sure you promote that post on the bloggers site. More promo for you: more promo for them. If you can, alter the heading and a little of the content on promo posts so readers don't tune out. Everyone wins.

I had one guest who signed up a dozen people, had her promo go up and never thanked or promoted any of them. I went back and checked her feed and she had used and abandoned us all. I removed her post from my blog, then a year later she was back asking for more help. When I politely explained to her why I was reluctant to host her a second time, I never heard from her again.

- A ridiculous number of guest posters who have deadlines and arrangements go missing, never to be heard from again. If you have made a commitment, **put it in your diary!** Scrawl it on the bathroom mirror in red lipstick to remind you... it's free advertising, don't underestimate the value! **A survival tip** for bloggers: I schedule my posts ahead and don't leave room for guest posts because of this. When one does actually come in, I move my work to make room for them.
- **Do not ever send out work which needs editing.** You are submitting the equivalent of an article to be published online which becomes part of your public work portfolio. Be professional. I don't mind tossing ideas around with writers by email, I am very happy to do that, but if I need to correct your grammar and your work looks thrown together, I will be very unhappy.
- If asked to, send **photos/illustrations** to make the post attractive and make sure they don't breach copyright.
- **Check the blog post for comments** about your work and reply to them. You will gain new followers.
- **If you need to submit late**, that's fine! Just let me know. I am flexible and most people are.

I truly do love to have guests. They come up with ideas I had never thought of and I want this blog to be inclusive. I enjoy sharing. However, the number of hours I have wasted is ridiculous. I don't want to stop guest posts, but I am going to be very careful about how I go about it. From now guest posts are *by invitation only*. If I follow you, know you're a great writer and know you've got your head on straight, you'll hear from me. The best posts I have had are the ones I have asked for.

Your Individuality is Your Greatest Asset: Writing and Marketing as You

If all writers thought and expressed themselves the same way, all books would be the same. Fortunately, they aren't. We enjoy libraries stocked with diverse characters, settings, views and approaches. There is always something new to discover. It whets our appetite for thinking outside our own style and genre.

However, as I roam around writer's blogs on the Internet, I see so much of the same repeated. The same blogging challenges, the same badges, the same marketing techniques. I also read regurgitated lists of rules on how often we must blog to capture the attention of search engines, approach social media and present ourselves. There are excellent reasons for following some of that advice... but...

If our success as writers is dependent on *our individual* creative instincts, why do we fall into a carbon copy approach online? I feel like rebelling: jumping out of line and saying, "Hey, I am going to be ME. If you don't like my style, that's OK. I don't like everyone's style either. I am not going to conform and fail at being myself."

Following the flock of sheep in front of us involves the risk that all people will see, is another woolly behind. We can be too well blended into an indistinguishable mass of cream woolly behinds. When you promote other writers on Triberr and Twitter, you can start to tune out and not pass on another round of giveaways, challenge posts and blog tours. You're looking for something different, something that catches your interest and hasn't been done before. A new design. A new point of view. A new theme. With the number of people online, that's not always easy to do; but when you put yourself forward in your own individualistic style, then people do notice. That can generate a more positive response.

So, while being sensible and sticking to the most essential rules for promotion, may I challenge you to not be afraid to be **yourself**. Show *your* personality, show *your* passion for your work and if you hate blog challenges or tours, don't do it! Find an approach that fits who you are.

Be yourself. You are your best shot at success.

Faulty-Tasking

According to the Journal of Experimental Psychology, my work pattern is wrong. I write while getting laundry done, checking email, answering the phone and whatever else comes up. It is something we're used to. Even though we have far more leisure time than our predecessors, we fill it to the brim, so we have to multitask.

So unless you are texting rather than driving, what is the problem? Well, as good as we think we are at keeping all the balls in the air, the hard data is, we're taking 50% longer to get things done. We have to go back and redo jobs, as details have been forgotten, and the quality of what we do achieve is not as good. Can we afford that in a competitive writing market?

On TED Talks, a speaker named Paolo Cardini said, "forget multi-tasking, try mono-tasking." He was advocating limiting the amount of constant, hectic activity we engage in, and doing one thing at a time... with focus. It makes sense. That way we are less stressed, achieve more and what we do is better!

If you do not believe you can get work done any other way, stop, take a deep breath and look at whether or not multitasking is really working for you. Perhaps you need to schedule time with the Internet off, phone on voicemail and simply focus on what you are writing.

The Road to Success is Paved by Free-Sharing

I have accidentally discovered an under-promoted formula for getting new followers and being seen online. I came across it when trying to reduce my workload. It's simple. I call it "free-sharing."

I'm not talking about social media sharing, blog post promotion, Stumble Upon and those methods. I am talking about letting other writers in on *my territory*, so they can use what I have, build a community and promote themselves.

Hang on, I am a business. That's against the rules, right? You set yourself up, work like crazy and *never* give the competitor an inch. You know what? I tried that. It doesn't work. Growth started to happen when I began to share other people's work on [Triberr](#). Then I started to retweet other's work more generously. More of your tweets get shared than my own promo. That is my rule.

I opened up most of my boards on [Pinterest](#) as community boards: in a few months, have gone from 90 followers to over 900... THEN I opened up my Facebook business page which I have spent *considerable* advertising money on to other contributors. (I hope my bank manager isn't reading this. That is a huge business no no!) I gave away a good portion of eighteen months of hard work for free. It was one of the best decisions I've made. Seven of us manage [Write Your Life Story](#) now, and it's much lower stress and the content is far better!

I love seeing people ask for guest bloggers to come and display their wares. I do that too and I've had awesome posts on this blog. I created an [Award](#) to encourage others and have gotten my socks blessed off! I've made friends, my follower count has blossomed and I enjoy what I am doing so much more.

Being a Star Wars fan of old, I always remember that line Princess Leia delivered to Tarkin. In essence, the tighter you try and control something, the more it will slip through your fingers and you will lose it.

Open the doors to your world and work collaboratively with other writers. You will experience a satisfying difference.

About the Author

Cate Russell-Cole is a qualified Creativity Coach and Social Worker. She has a love of the science fiction - fantasy genre and has been writing diaries, appalling poetry and short stories since she was a child. Cate lives in Brisbane, Australia with her husband and two cats and habitually writes everything in Australian English.

Over her career, she has researched, written and taught five creativity-orientated courses; worked as a freelance writer, graphic designer, desktop publisher and has authored ten non-fiction books. Privately, she is a Christian science fiction/ fantasy author who is working on The Chronicles of Mirchar Series, plus a non-fiction study guide on the life of King David.

Publications by Cate Russell-Cole

- Write Your Life Story E-Course
- Unleashing Your Creative Spirit
- Prayer Journal Workshop
- Creating and Resolving Conflict in Fiction (Four Dimensional Characterisation Series)
- Building Emotionally Realistic Characters (Four Dimensional Characterisation Series)
- Phoenix Rising: Conquering the Stresses of the Writer's Life
- Phoenix Thriving: Conquering Stress and Burnout in the Blogging Life
- Savvy Blogging for Time Starved Writers
- Avoiding Back Pain: A Simple Guide
- Maintaining Your Independence, A Course For Seniors
- Person To Person: A Layman's Course in Communication Skills
- The Chronicles of Mirchar: The Dragon Tree
- The Chronicles of Mirchar: The Memory Library
- The King David Study Guide